

[summer 2005]



san francisco art institute

educating artists since 1871

President's Message

As we approach Commencement, I am pleased to share with you some dispatches from this most exciting of times at the San Francisco Art Institute. This issue of our semiannual magazine is full of the vitality, rigor, and innovations of our students, faculty, and friends.

First, we honor an extraordinary artist, colleague, and friend, retiring Dean of Academic Affairs Larry Thomas. Larry has served the Institute for 25 years, as a teacher, dean, and interim president. He was also a student here, earning an MFA (Printmaking) in 1979. In these many roles, he has been an unflagging advocate for the seriousness and uniqueness of what we do as an institution. His leadership has profoundly reshaped the school (see the interview with him on pp. 2–9).

To honor his many and varied contributions, we have created the Thomas Scholarship Fund. Through it, SFAI will support two young artists each year who, whether because of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or economic circumstance, have had limited educational opportunities in the arts.

We are also pleased to announce the recipient of our Honorary Doctorate in Fine Arts this year, renowned Brazilian artist Cildo Meireles. Known for his participatory, “relational” work, Meireles turned conceptual art into a means to extend the very idea of civil society.

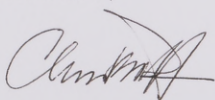
SFAI will also be presenting the Douglas G. MacAgy Distinguished Achievement Award for 2005 to someone well-known in the national arts community—activist and philanthropist Marion E. Greene. The MacAgy Award recognizes those exceptional individuals who have extended our collective understanding of the role of art and artists. Over many varied projects—most recently through the LEF Foundation, which she founded with her children 20 years ago—Greene has insisted on the importance of a diverse, socially-engaged community of artists.

Please also welcome alumnus Clive McCarthy to the SFAI “family” as trustee. He joined the Board in November 2004 and brings to us a wealth of experience as an installation and new-media artist as well as a high-tech entrepreneur. Of course, SFAI has a most illustrious group of alumni, and we’re happy to add another rising star to the roster—Nicolas Block (BFA 2005), who has just won a Fulbright Fellowship to study in Latvia. His work focuses on performance and photography.

Another innovative artist whose work we profile in this issue is distinguished faculty John Roloff. Chairman of the Sculpture Department at SFAI, and coordinator (with Meredith Tromble) of our Center for Art+Science, his work is an example of the interdisciplinary focus of the Institute. After almost 18 months as President, I can attest to SFAI being an institution without peer, a true community whose roots are deep. We’re grateful to Sculpture faculty Richard Berger for capturing a bit of our magic in his essay on “The Power of Place.”

Please join us at our upcoming MFA and BFA Spring Shows to celebrate our students' 2005 Commencement.

Best wishes,



CHRIS BRATTON, PRESIDENT



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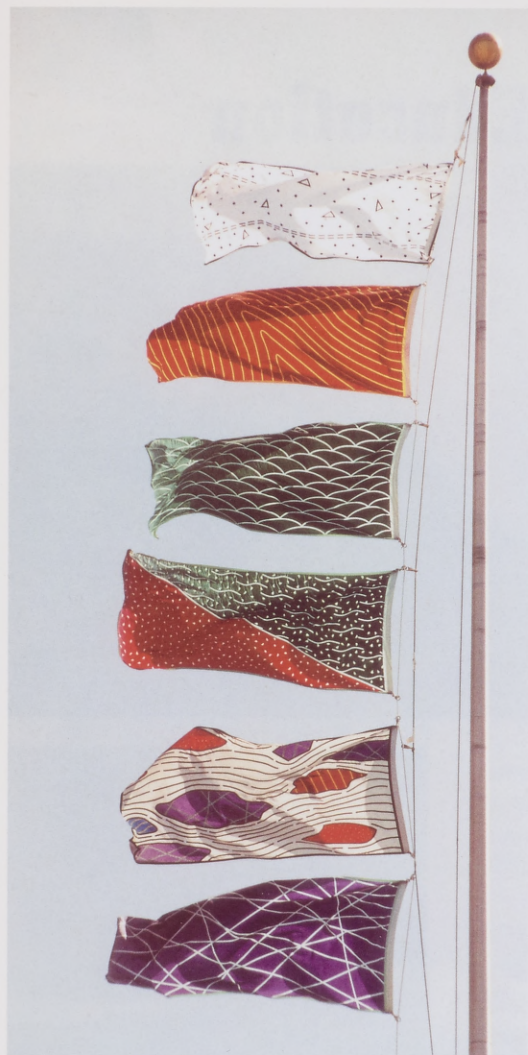
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Current and recent exhibitions of work by alumni, students, faculty, and staff online at www.sfai.edu.

NEWS AND EVENTS

Subscribe to our biweekly e-mail newsletter about upcoming events by sending an e-mail to reception@sfai.edu.



John Roloff, *Geology Flags Project: Franciscan Formation / San Francisco, CA* (detail), 2004, fabric paint on nylon, rope, flag hardware, each flag 45 x 92 in., flying at 555 Beach St., San Francisco

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cover: Larry Thomas
Lily of the Nile, 2005,
etching, 24 x 18 in.

Larry Thomas on Art and Education

You might say retiring Dean of Academic Affairs Larry Thomas grew up at SFAI. He has spent a full generation at the school: as MFA alumnus (Printmaking, 1979), Printmaking Department Manager (1980–81), Faculty (1983–94), Chair of the Printmaking Department (1992–93), Dean of Academic Affairs (1994–2005), and Interim President (2001–03). During all these phases in his academic career, he has remained an exceptional teacher and leader, and, above all, an artist. In this wide-ranging interview, he talks about his passions for drawing, painting, and printmaking and his esteem for the Institute—its history and present and future challenges, and his own.



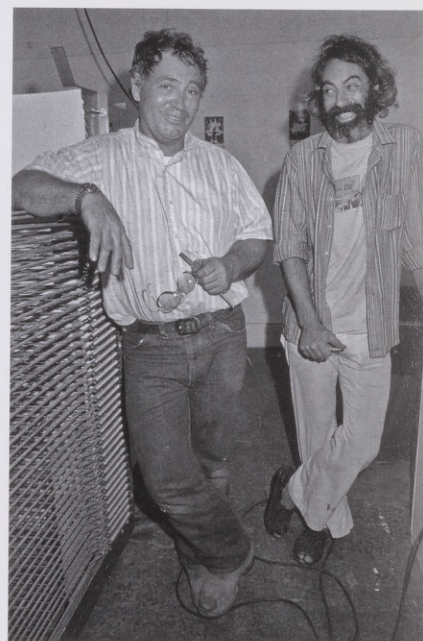
On Art

Victoria Cooper: How did you get interested in becoming an artist? How far back does that interest or self-knowledge go?

Larry Thomas: As a child I loved to draw. I remember drawing from an early age and really becoming serious about drawing once I reached high school, where there was, in those days, an art program. I was fortunate enough to have a high school teacher who encouraged my interest in drawing and introduced me to the idea of attending art school. I grew up in the rural South—all of my family is from Mississippi—and I wasn't exposed to the various educational and urban cultural experiences and opportunities that many students have today. After high school, I applied for and received a scholarship to a small arts college in Memphis [at that time, The Memphis Academy of Art; now, The Memphis College of Art] and, after graduating with a BFA degree, I traveled around the country and eventually ended up in San Francisco in the 1960s. When I decided to go back to graduate school to work toward an MFA degree some 12 years later, I applied to SFAI, was accepted into the Printmaking program, and completed the program in 1979. And somehow, I've never really left. Coming to SFAI in the mid-1970s opened a new world for me. It allowed me to have art as the primary focus of my life, with a greater depth of purpose and a more serious commitment of time and energy.

VC: Your focus here at SFAI was in printmaking, and you've done a lot with etching and engravings. Why were you attracted to this medium?

LT: It's hard to say, but printmaking in so many ways is just another process or another way of drawing—using metal plates, acids, and inks to achieve graphic images, as opposed to paper and pencil, charcoal, or crayon. I'm also attracted to the physicality of the printmaking process—that is, primarily etching and engraving. In general, the various printmaking techniques are delayed processes, requiring several or many steps before realizing the ultimate result of one's effort. This way of working allows for careful consideration and demands thoughtful decision-making, in a sense it's a contemplative or



above: Larry Thomas, teacher, with students; and Larry Thomas, Printmaking studio manager, with Gordon Kluge

right: four etchings from Balzac's *The Unknown Masterpiece*, an artist's book made in collaboration with Chuck Hobson

The smell of the ink, the feel of the paper, the dampness of the blotters, the pressure of the press, the action of the acid ... it's all very seductive in some strange way



meditative process of making images. Also, the materials are very sensuous to me. There's the smell of the ink, the feel of the paper, the dampness of the blotters, the pressure of the press, the action of the acid ... all very seductive in some strange way; both physically appealing and technically challenging at the same time. Certain technical skills are required as well as a knowledge of the medium's history—all deeply satisfying to me.

VC: Do you work in different media for your printmaking—wood, metal, etc.?

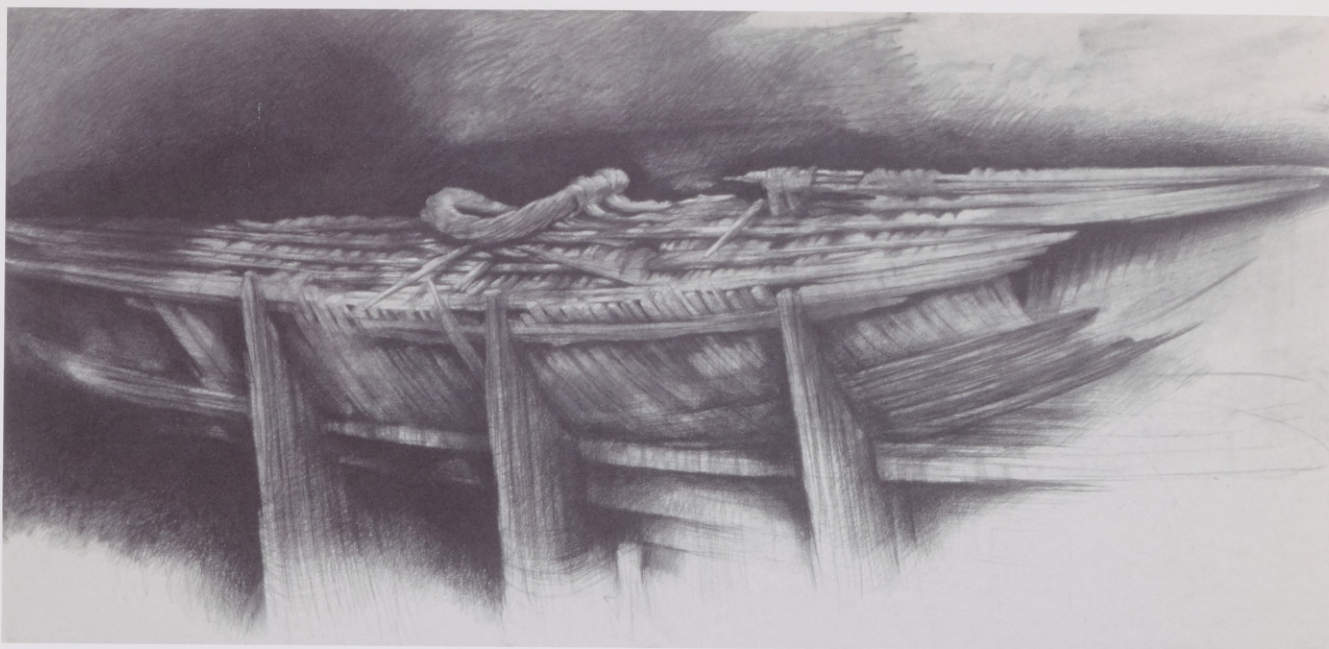
LT: I work primarily with metal plates, either zinc or copper, and various techniques of intaglio, which denotes images, lines, textures, or marks produced beneath the surface of the plate. The various intaglio techniques include aquatint, dry point, engraving, hard and soft-ground etching, spit bite, etc.—all produced in different ways and each with a very different result. Ultimately, the plate is inked and printed on an etching press, transferring the image to paper under great pressure.

VC: Isn't it true that you are actually having to imagine the finished image in reverse, right to left, left to right?

LT: Yes. But it sounds more mysterious than it really is. There are many artists, for instance, who have mirrors in their studios, so they can see an image from a different orientation or opposite from the way in which it was drawn or painted. We are always testing our perceptions, seeing everything from a different vantage point, so it's easier than you would think to work in reverse. One becomes used to the fact that the image is reversed once it is printed; it's merely an inversion. Of course, if one is using text, then that's a different set of considerations.

VC: Didn't you work on a book project with fellow printmaker Chuck Hobson here in the mid-1990s?

LT: Yes, the book was Balzac's *The Unknown Masterpiece*. Chuck had made a translation of it into English, and he had planned on developing illustrations for



the book himself. We spoke about the project, tossed around different ideas, looked at drawings that I had been working on from the live figure, and, ultimately, he asked me to collaborate with him on the project. It's one of many fine, limited-edition, artist-book publications that he has produced through his press, Pacific Editions. This particular project was an extraordinary experience for me. It was very much a collaborative project, working with Chuck, Kay Bradner from Katherine Lincoln Press, Donald Farnsworth from Magnolia Editions, Andrew Hoyem from Arion Press, and a group of three SFAI students over an entire summer.

The images that I provided were each composed of two separate plates; engravings of plant forms superimposed and printed in various colors over soft-ground etchings based on my charcoal drawings of the human figure. We had quite a production process during that summer. While the students were printing the edition of the figurative plates, I was working on the engraving plates to be overprinted once the editions were complete. The colors of the inks simulated the materials and textures of the original drawings—charcoal, conté crayon, pencil, etc. The juxtaposition of the sharp, crisp lines of the engraved plant forms printed in contrasting inks over the soft, smudgy etchings of the human figure printed monochromatically gave a very subtle, luscious effect. There's a copy of the book in our library.

VC: How would you describe your inspiration for your work and the intention behind your work?

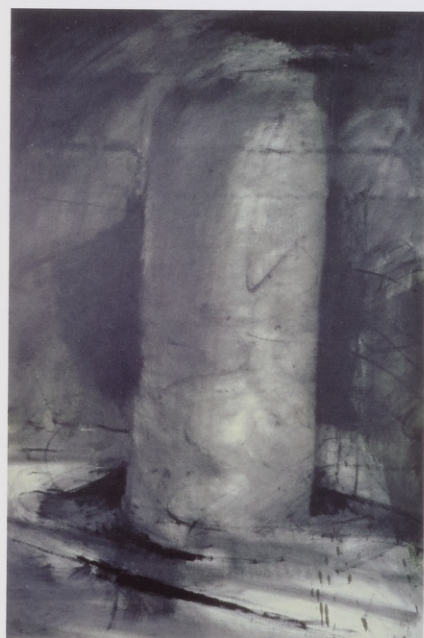
LT: Over the years, most of my work has been based on a personal investigation and narrative; I've worked with images that echo or reflect various aspects of Native American culture, in particular the Choctaw-Chickasaw culture, which is part of my heritage and a subject particularly important to me. In my work of the 1970s, '80s, and '90s, certain images kept recurring. My interest seems to be in the old traditions and the commitment of those traditions to prose or verse: the mythology, rituals, dances, and various paraphernalia associated with rites and annual observances—all somewhat universal symbols, yet specific to the culture as well.



above left: *Mortuary Vessel*, 1990, charcoal on paper, 42.5 x 60 in.

right: *Temple Light I*, 1990, oil on canvas, 72 x 48 in.

I've worked with images that echo or reflect various aspects of Native American culture, in particular the Choctaw-Chickasaw culture, which is part of my heritage



One recurring image for me is that of a boat, canoe, or vessel uncovered or unearthed as if from an excavation site. I made large-scale drawings using raw-earth pigments and oil paintings with this as the central image. The images emerged from layers and layers of ground pigment embedded in the surface of the large sheets of paper; the images are pulled from the dark, dense layers of color into the soft, subtle light of underground chambers. The vessel form was variously interpreted as both a funeral pyre or a mode of transportation from one world to another; a transformative form symbolizing change, transportation, and spiritual rebirth. Other recurring images are the wing and the solitary black island hovering on the horizon of the sea—again, both reflecting a sense of time and transformation.

And then, of course, my drawings made from the human figure have been a great and wonderful distraction for me during my tenure as dean. I find drawing directly from the live model like making music; the focus must be complete, and nothing else is allowed to enter. Drawing from the live figure is also a great test of perception and observation for me. I worked for years on a weekly basis in a private studio with others drawing from the model, each model more unique, wonderful, and mysterious than the next. I've made hundreds and hundreds of drawings from models over the past ten years or so. It's one of my great pleasures and luxuries, working from the figure.

On Teaching

VC: Did you teach anywhere else besides SFAI?

LT: Yes, I taught evening drawing classes at Santa Rosa Junior College for several years right after completing my graduate work here at SFAI, and then I taught drawing, painting, and printmaking for five years in the art department at Stanford during the late '80s and early '90s. I have also been a guest lecturer or visiting lecturer for short periods at numerous art schools and colleges across the country. Each place, each school, or university art department is different from the others. A university tends to have a greater cross-section of students, whereas an art school like SFAI has a more focused student body; that is, one focused primarily on the studio practice of art and not offering majors among a wide array of subjects often available on a large university campus.

However, the liberal arts component of the undergraduate program at SFAI has been significantly broadened and infused with rigor during the past decade. Students working toward their BFA degree understand the importance of the liberal arts component of the degree and have risen to the challenge of producing a writing portfolio along with their studio portfolio. Perhaps more than ever, today's students must be prepared to be articulate about their work, be armed with a knowledge of the art history informing their work, and have an ability to understand and address the cultural and social contexts in which today's artists work.

VC: What sort of student do you think the Art Institute attracts?

LT: During my tenure as dean, I've had opportunities to see many other programs and institutions and have made many visits to art schools over the years. I've also interviewed faculty and students at various art schools, and I believe I have a rather broad grasp of the differences between the various schools and

the students they attract. What I've noticed is that this school is quite different from other art schools and, consequently, attracts a different kind of student. This may sound strange, but there is a particular texture to our school, a culture that has informed and has been informed by what takes place here in this particular studio environment. There is a seriousness, an expectation of independence, a challenge, a relentless questioning and debating that takes place here. All these qualities are actually palpable and often tangible. There are also the great legacy and the great history that seem to literally permeate the walls of this great institution. I don't use the word 'great' lightly. This is a great institution, unlike any other you will visit. The educational experience that is offered at SFAI has a resonance, an echo, if you will, that resounds not only within the school itself but also beyond, in the wider community of contemporary art.

SFAI attracts students that are interested in an intense experience, in working with a group of faculty, very often on a one-to-one basis, that provide a challenge to them and push them beyond where they are or even thought they could be. We seem to exert a pull for a certain kind of student who isn't afraid to take risks. I've found that our students go beyond our expectations and come up with very interesting alternatives. They challenge us as teachers and artists. They ask, "Why? Why are we doing something this way?" I found this on our winter trip to Oaxaca this year. The trip was centered on three specific media—clay, wood, and print—yet one student wanted to make a film. So he found a postman and followed him around on his postal route for a full day, photographing the locals and scenes from this vantage point. I understand that it is quite a wonderful film. The teacher, Mildred Howard, and I were there to facilitate the students' interests, not to impede them. That's our job: to provide the atmosphere and the structures where students and teachers can come together to express their ideas and investigate things together.

VC: What do you think students want from their experience here?

LT: Students come with certain expectations of the educational experience and of the resources to support those expectations. It is our responsibility to make certain that the environment we provide is conducive and supportive to these needs and expectations. Students need technological resources, not just a classroom to work in; they need an engaged faculty who understand the complexities of their lives. They need library resources and exhibition opportunities; they want to work and study in an arena that is safe for exploration and experimentation, yet challenging and rigorous; they want to develop their craft, their work, and to feel confident that their efforts are taken seriously. They also want a well-rounded educational experience, one that combines the studio experience with academic rigor to be better prepared as professional artists once they complete their studies here at SFAI.

Students today need equipment, facilities, housing, and opportunities for work/study that will make their college experience an integrated and successful one. But, as I said, they also expect a quality education. Here at SFAI, they'll be pushed, encouraged, inspired, demanded of, or challenged in particular ways that they probably wouldn't find at another school. Students who come to SFAI expect to get the most out of their experience here; they take their education very seriously; they take advantage of the opportunities that are provided to them. You have to remember that there are many important and amazing artists who have come from this school. I doubt they would have been of the same caliber had they gone to another school.

At SFAI, students are pushed, encouraged, inspired, demanded of, and challenged in particular ways that they probably wouldn't find at another school



above: *Night Passage*, 1985, charcoal and dry pigment on paper, 80 x 128 in.

On Leadership

VC: You've been a teacher, a dean, and a president at SFAI. What propelled you into all these roles?

LT: I have always found great pleasure and satisfaction in teaching. Taking on an administrative role was not in my plan; however, given the circumstances that led to my appointment as dean back in 1993, I chose to meet the challenge presented to me at that time. I felt confident that I was capable of contributing more and, ultimately, that I would be able to make a difference in the role of dean. Taking into consideration the fact that I had been on the faculty for eight or ten years prior to my appointment, I realized that I had developed a good working relationship with my peers and that, given the opportunity, we could work together to make necessary changes in order for the school to move forward.

The previous dean, Keith Morrison, had recently left to become the dean of the creative arts program at San Francisco State University. The president here at that time, Bill Barrett, and the board of trustees decided to look within the ranks of the faculty for a new dean. Ultimately, I was appointed to the position for a period of only five years; that has now turned into 12 years.

I also served as interim president during a two-year period following Ella King Torrey's resignation. During that two-year period, I worked with Lorne Buchman, who served as the CEO of SFAI, and Chuck Collins, Chair of the

Board of Trustees. I must say, both Lorne and Chuck were invaluable to the leadership of the school during that period. I am so grateful for their support, encouragement, and wisdom.

At the beginning of 2004, Chris Bratton was appointed president, and I returned to my former position as dean. As you know, Chris has brought a renewed spirit to the institution during his first year at SFAI. There are new curricular initiatives, a new leadership team in place, plans for developing new programs and expanding the curriculum into new areas—all things that bode well for the future of SFAI. SFAI is now on the threshold of a new decade, infused with enthusiasm and inspired leadership.

Even though an administrative position was not in my original plan way back in 1993, I have received great satisfaction in my role as dean. Taking on such an important position has not only been a great honor and privilege for me, but it has also been immensely rewarding in ways that one could never imagine.

VC: What have been the achievements you'd like to be remembered for here?

LT: Well, I'm most proud of the academic successes we have made during my tenure as dean. The new Summer MFA Program was established four years ago with great success, meeting the projected goals each year and leveling out at the size and scope initially intended. This program, led by Pegan Brooke, is the only program of its kind on the West Coast and has served an important student population previously underserved. Additionally, this past year we instituted the new Centers for Interdisciplinary Study, a major curricular initiative that significantly broadens the educational program at SFAI and repositions it for the next decade. The establishment of the Design+Technology Department (formerly the Center for Digital Media), led by Paul Klein, represents a major innovation for SFAI. The new Digital Imaging Lab, initially established through the efforts of Jack Fulton and the Digital Darkroom, and its role in providing the highest quality digital print processes for students and artists in the community, is another important accomplishment. The establishment of the writing program supporting undergraduate liberal arts students is yet another significant achievement; the new Center for Individual Learning, which provides a writing lab and individual tutors for students with special needs, is another important addition to our academic programs. Also, very important to the future of SFAI, we successfully completed two reaccreditation reviews, one with the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD) and another with the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). These reviews represent significant institutional planning, self-review, and assessment.

There is still much to be accomplished but, looking back over the past decade, I am very pleased with all the progress that has been made collaboratively and with the various changes that have been put in place to better position our programs for the future and for the competitive market.

VC: What experiences are especially memorable for you?

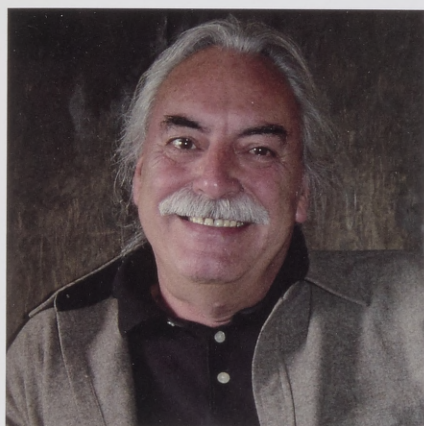
LT: I was fortunate to be invited to participate in several studies reviewing the development of educational programs in other countries. One was a project funded by the Ford Foundation which took a group of about 25 professionals

New Scholarship Fund Honors Larry Thomas

SFAI is proud to announce the 2005 launching of the Thomas Scholarship Fund in honor of retiring Dean of Academic Affairs Larry Thomas. Dean Thomas led the San Francisco Art Institute for over 12 years, presiding over the school's commitment to challenging the traditional notions of creative excellence, critical thinking, and the role of the artist in contemporary society. He had also served on the faculty at SFAI and is a graduate of the school (MFA, 1979, Printmaking).

An advocate for diversity as a fundamental value of the Institute, Dean Thomas was particularly attentive to the goal of creating and supporting a diverse creative community. The Thomas Scholarship is intended as an encouragement to those students who—whether because of race, ethnicity, gender, or economic circumstance—have had limited educational opportunity in the arts.

Students will be identified for consideration through the Institute's national and international student recruitment program. Applicants will be evaluated through an interview process on two criteria: their capacity for critical thinking and potential for creative accomplishment.



The scholarship is awarded annually in the amount of \$12,500 to two (2) incoming undergraduate students and is renewable for up to four years for a total of \$50,000. In addition, Thomas Scholars will be paired with faculty mentors for the duration of their term of study at the San Francisco Art Institute. Faculty will be carefully selected as Thomas Scholar Mentors based on their demonstrated commitment to supporting the values and ideals that have exemplified Dean Thomas's tenure at the Institute.

For further information about the Fund and how to contribute to it, please contact SFAI's Vice President of Advancement, Lisa James, at 415.749.4582 or ljames@sfaiedu.

from the fields of art, music, dance, folk traditions, crafts, etc. to China to evaluate and study a new university-based program being implemented to ensure the preservation of the traditional arts, crafts, music, and dance of the various tribal cultures in the southern Chinese province of Yunan. This was an extraordinary experience, working with professionals from all parts of the world to evaluate a program of enormous importance for the future of the traditional crafts and arts of this region of China.

Another important project was the invitation to assist in the establishment of a printmaking facility in Amman, Jordan through the National Museum of Art. I worked with students and professionals setting up a new facility to enable the teaching and production of fine prints through the museum. I was part of this project over a period of several months, and was able to establish significant connections and friendships in the Middle East through this project. Another aspect of this same project involved the evaluation of the fine arts program at the University of Damascus, Syria, an ancient university steeped in tradition and extremely insular in its approach to art and artmaking. This was perhaps one of the most interesting and rewarding experiences I have had during my tenure as dean.

Finally, closer to home, I've been very pleased to be a part of establishing various partnerships with SFAI in the San Francisco Bay Area through internships and collaborative arrangements with several arts organizations, including the Exploratorium, San Francisco Center for the Book, Arion Press, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, Bay Area Video Coalition, Film Arts Foundation, Headlands Center for the Arts, etc., all of which benefit our educational programs at SFAI.

On Retirement

VC: What does the future hold for a retired Larry Thomas?

LT: I have many projects that have been "on hold" in my studio, which is outside of Fort Bragg in Mendocino County. I'll be working on those projects, doing a residency in Oregon in the fall, and becoming more involved with the Alliance of Artists Communities, a national board with member organizations representing over 250 residency programs throughout the US. I'm also involved with the Alliance of Artists Communities in Montana with my friend Anne Appleby; the Alliance provides opportunities for graduating MFA students from SFAI as well as other schools across the country. There will not be a shortage of projects for me to work on after leaving SFAI.

But first, I'm planning to take a solo trip as a symbolic acknowledgment of this moment in my life. It might very well be a trip to the desert, which has always been a healing, inspiring, and rejuvenating place for me.

I know I leave the Institute in good hands. We have named a new dean [Nigerian-born curator, commentator, and critic Okwui Enwezor], and we have new executive leadership in our key areas: academic planning, marketing and communications, human resources, institutional advancement, finance, and enrollment. We have a growing Board of Trustees and major curricular initiatives under way. I am confident the San Francisco Art Institute of the future will be an amazing community of artists and leaders, as it has been since 1871.

—Interview conducted by Victoria Cooper

Making the Connection

Sculptor John Roloff draws upon his background in the sciences to make works that resonate physically, culturally, historically, and mythologically.

Although I'm a sculptor today and one of the coordinators for SFAI's Center for Art+Science, in addition to art, I studied geology at UC Davis as an undergraduate. Growing up in the American West, where much of the landscape's geologic history is visible, I was fascinated by the immense physicality and natural processes inherent in what I was experiencing. A critical artifact of my double major of art and geology in college was the recognition that many of the materials of sculpture—such as clays and feldspars—have a natural geologic form and context. For example, I recognized plaster as gypsum, a type of sedimentary rock, which has a complex natural history of origin, deposition, and lithification, subsequently altered by industrial processes for human consumption. So, for me, it was less a powder in a bag and more a material informed by its place in the landscape and a function of temporal and physical cycles outside of normal human experience. I think this observation was very seminal in my making links between science and art as well as in the approach I took to research and site-specific thinking in numerous environmental projects over the past 30 years or so.

This perception of the natural state of sculpture materials pushed me to explore different terrains in ceramics and sculpture. I realized that in some sense the objects made from earth materials are really the residue of a process; so, to a certain extent, they're secondary, particularly in the context of how they came to be. Thinking about this, I conducted experiments within the kilns at my disposal, designing pieces to collapse or to be heavily influenced by the process of the firing, similar to the use of "agents" or chance in the work of 1960s conceptual artists and musicians.

This interest in experimentation is also a link to my scientific background—looking at the world through a 'chemical lens' and creating situations that are completed by the materials and the process. I liked the dynamic aspect of the firings, not knowing quite what to expect. Similar to the Japanese tradition of relating ceramics to nature in Shintoism, I saw my work as a dialogue, where the material was allowed to 'speak.' Reinforcing this attitude was my reading of Gary Snyder's work, where he looked at the relationship of nature to the unconscious. I was also very interested at this time in landscape painting, especially by the Romantics, who were what I might call "existential" painters. Turner, for instance, would go to the top of a mountain during a storm to paint the experience, and grab some of the soil from the ground to work into his watercolors and drawings.

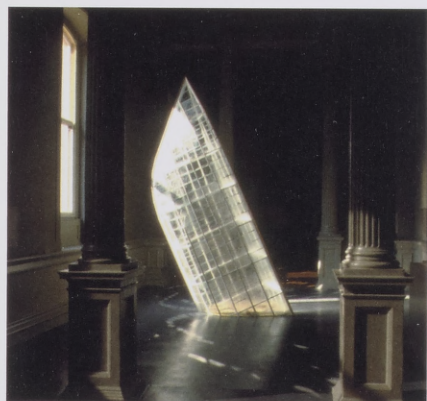
At this time, a lot of interesting work was being done by the post-conceptual and earthworks artists. I became friends with the artist Dennis Oppenheim while I was teaching at the University of Kentucky in the mid-1970s—we had numerous far-ranging and exploratory conversations. Wanting to engage more fully with the materials I was using, and to extend the idea of the kiln poetically as well as with reference to geology, I started doing site works in the late 1970s. These were firings in specially constructed and shaped kilns sited on the landscape like material performances. To arrive at the structure of the kilns and



top: *Wave Ship (Of Fire)*, 1984, steel, ceramic fiber blanket, glass, iron ore, propane, 32' (9.8 m) long, Detroit, MI

above: *Pure Mix*, 2004, Roloff/Diller + Scofidio collaboration, branded designer-water, sea ice, LCD lights, brooms, acrylic site guides, weather; *The Snow Show*, Kemi, Finland

John Roloff is Chair of the Sculpture Department and Co-Coordinator of the Center for Art+Science at the San Francisco Art Institute.



above center: *Vanishing Ship (Greenhouse for Lake Lahontan)*, 1989, glass, water, and sediment from Pyramid Lake, Nevada; 12 ft. high, steel, installed at Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC

above: *Holocene Passage*, 2002, Archivio Emily Harvey, Venice, Italy (shown as part of the Architectural Biennale)

their relationship to the landscape, I would often research the geologic and cultural history of the terrain, firing materials on the site and mimicking the volcanic or other related processes. I did about 12 of these performances/installations, some quite large, during this period in my career [1979–1992].

More recently, a lot of work extends from the vitrine or greenhouse-like pieces I developed concurrently with the kilns in the 1980s. A steel and glass ship structure done for the Matrix program at the Berkeley Art Museum in 1987 called *Vanishing Ship (Greenhouse for Lake Lahontan)* was sited beneath a skylight in the museum and contained water and sediment from Pyramid Lake (a remnant of a much larger Ice Age lake in northern Nevada). This piece created a contained climate (like a test tube), where algae might grow. Symbolically related to the greenhouses of the 18th and 19th centuries, I see this piece as a eulogy to the death of the Ice Age, the sinking ship referencing that demise as well as being a metaphor for the process of sedimentary deposition. Similarly, *Deep Gradient* from 1993, installed in downtown San Francisco at Yerba Buena Gardens, has ocean-floor sediment collected from the continental shelf about four miles off the California coast.

These works evolved into architectural interventions referencing the gallery as site, such as the inside/outside piece *Holocene Terrace*, done as an installation at the Lance Fung Gallery in New York City in 1999; *Original Depositional Environment* at Galley Paule Anglim here in San Francisco; and *Holocene Passage* for Archivio Emily Harvey in Venice, Italy (shown as part of the 2002 Architectural Biennale). All of these pieces engage with the daily weather and the architecture of their sites. In the piece at Gallery Paule Anglim, tanks of water and living algae were placed into the skylights, a photosynthetic space that prompted the growth of the algae, illuminating the gallery with increasingly green light.

Newer works like the *Geology Flags Project* (2004), and *Pure Mix* (2004), a collaboration with the architects Diller+Scofidio, for *The Snow Show*, an exhibition in Finland, in some ways refer back to the early perceptions of material, industry, and landscape through the concept of anthroturbation, or “human mixing,” where human processes like quarrying are seen as an analog to a natural process like erosion. *Geology Flags Project / Franciscan Formation / San Francisco, CA* is comprised of flags representing each of the six main rock groups that make up San Francisco down to the mantle, including reinforced concrete, referring to the “strata” of architecture that sit on top of the landscape.

In the current philosophical debate over humanity’s relationship with nature, I have a tendency to side with the Romantics like Coleridge and Wordsworth, thinking that human activity is contained within nature. I aspire to pre-semantic, pre-scientific states, seeking more intuitive and primal positions, ecologies, and evocations of site and material. Science is for me a profusely rich pathway or an engaging tool, but not an end point. One may even think of the Art Institute in this way, constructed as it is primarily of reinforced concrete, a mixture of steel, cement, and aggregate, originally ore, limestone, and gravels deposited in seas and valleys over millennia, mined and altered by industry, deposited into architectural forms, creating a meta-formation of humanity and nature in the current Epoch. —John Roloff

Living and Drawing from the 'In-Between'

Orphaned by the war in Bosnia, Behida Dolic made her way to the United States and to a new life as an artist at the Institute.

It has been a long road to the Art Institute for Behida Dolic, now an undergraduate in the New Genres Department. But she wouldn't want it any other way. "My experiences have made me what I am today," she says, "and I can't imagine my life without them now."

Those experiences have included being orphaned at 11 by the war in Bosnia, living in refugee camps along the northern border, and making her way, along with her brother and three sisters, to Croatia, then Germany, then the United States. A friend of her parents led the children out of Bosnia, himself a victim of the decimation of their village, Dabravine, in 1994-95.

In Chicago, social service agencies lined up an apartment and factory jobs for the children, whose ages ranged from 13 to 18 when they got there. But Behida soon moved to Iowa, where her older sister got a job in a pig slaughterhouse. "There was a Bosnian community there," say Behida, "and many of them did not speak English. I started taking ESL (English as a Second Language) courses and worked in a ham factory—much better than the slaughterhouse. I also completed high school and got into the University of Northern Iowa's Art Department. I was the first in the history of my family to go to college, but I had always been artistic. I remember drawing as a young child. I loved to watch the women singing in the fields near my village, and I can see now how much of my work today holds the memories of those places and emotions. But I am able to make them into visual poems now."

It wasn't always so. When Behida saw an opportunity to study in Florence after her first year at Iowa, she grabbed it, working in different media: video, and monoprints, installation, and film. During her years at the school, she made a series of monoprints in black and white that captured the emotional quality of this time. "They were of boats on a tumultuous sea," she says. "The people in them were families fighting with each other. I never really know where my art comes from precisely, but I think it reflects that I come from so many different directions. These works are 'flashes' from my life.

"For a long time, I worked out my emotions in my artworks. They were heavy and dark. People who looked at them told me they were powerful. I think I was painting or drawing the battle that life is most of the time. Many people are not as aware of the battle as I am: it just so happened that I was born into a time and a place where a very dramatic battle was going on, so I had a fuller consciousness of it at a very young age.

"Now, I work from the same memories, but my work is lighter and more constructive, I think. I enjoy the lightness of how things can be. No matter how heavy they are, they can still be light and beautiful, don't you think?"



I enjoy the lightness of how things can be. No matter how heavy they are, they can still be light and beautiful





Recent work includes drawings of forms that have been called bird-like or snail-like; they float in an airy, neutral space. "To me, these drawings are like poems," says Behida. "I hope they open up something in the viewer." Another recent work is a video installation of two moons and their passage through dusk and nighttime: *The Door to Your Day Is the Door to Mine*.

When a professor in Italy said she should come to the San Francisco Art Institute, Behida jumped at the opportunity. "He thought the conceptual work being done here would be a good fit with my work," she says. "San Francisco and the Art Institute *have* been a good fit. I'm learning a lot here, from both the students and the faculty. My work is showing my new-found sense of freedom as a young adult and as an artist."

above: *Untitled*, 2005, ink on paper, 22 x 40 in.

left: *1000 Watermelon Birthdays*, 2005, film still

It's also showing something else Behida describes as a more profound change in her life. Like her 'boat people,' she is feeling at home in her own homelessness. "I relate to the water," she says. "There is nothing larger than the ocean, and when you are on the water you are not really relating to the land or to a country. If you think about it, you are always moving when you're on the water. I have spent a lot of time trying to make sense out of my mobility, and I am in a place now where I don't look for home anymore. I'm finally at home 'in between'—where I've been so much of my life. Because I'm no longer looking for a home, I feel I can go anywhere and be at home. I have survived and, better than that, I've done more already than I ever dreamed I could ever do from my little village in Bosnia." —Victoria Cooper

Learning from the Landscape

New BFA graduate and Fulbright Fellow Nicolas Block explores photography and performance, 'on the road.'

After leaving the University of Vermont in 2000 and getting rejected from the San Francisco Art Institute, Nicolas Block jumped on a plane, flew to Los Angeles, and hitchhiked to Vancouver. Armed with a little camera and a lot of determination, he photographed his way up and down the West Coast. During this time he developed a more focused body of work, finding the continuity and intensity that he knew his photos were lacking. His new portfolio won him acceptance into the Art Institute.

At SFAI, the New Genres Department and classes with Tony Labat challenged everything Nick thought about art. "During my first year, I thought that art was all about images. The idea that images should have meaning or a conceptual foundation just seemed ridiculous to me, and I fought it really hard," he says. "But when I accepted it, I accepted it really hard too. It was like I got a hook in my mouth; I was caught."

By sophomore year, Nick began working with performance instead of a camera. "What always mystified me about performance art was how it depends on the camera. So I tried to separate them somehow, to make photographs without a camera, to *perform* photographs."

With these ideas in his head, Nick took off for another adventure. He went to Prague to study with the Fluxus artist Milan Knížák. He was planning to develop work that was impossible to photograph but that would operate in the same ways that photos do. As he explains, "I wanted to make something more real, an image you couldn't just turn over like a photograph. One idea was to stand out on the street, and pass out fliers that said in Czech, 'Look up at that red window over there.' To have people making images with their own eyes, that's very photographic."

But Nick never distributed those fliers, and no one ever looked up at red windows he pointed out. When he got to Prague and told Professor Knížák about what he wanted to do, Knížák knew better. He came to class with a personalized assignment for each student, detailing their projects for the semester. Nick describes the moment he got his: "It said, 'Nicolas will draw from still lifes for half of the semester and then he will produce a project called *Prague: City of Czech Indians*.'"

"After I got my assignment, I lost some of the momentum I had for making performance work. I still made a lot of complex performances, as well as a series of erotic charcoal drawings rendered from the paused scenes of a video I discovered. But I was consumed by the landscape, and I became a photographer again. Thinking back, it seems like the purpose of Knížák's assignment was to make me stop and question the way I materialize my ideas."

Now, one year later, as he finishes up his final semester at SFAI, Nick has an impressive portfolio of photos from his studies in Eastern Europe. He captured the facades of postmodernist churches, crumbling housing developments, and the shifting economy of a region. In his photos, buildings sprout from fields,



I figured out that the conceptual talk actually comes from the work rather than the work coming from the talk



top: Augustow, Poland, 2003, C-print
(the big white church in the muddy field)

above: Cesu Region, Estonia, 2003,
C-print (trees in the middle of a field)

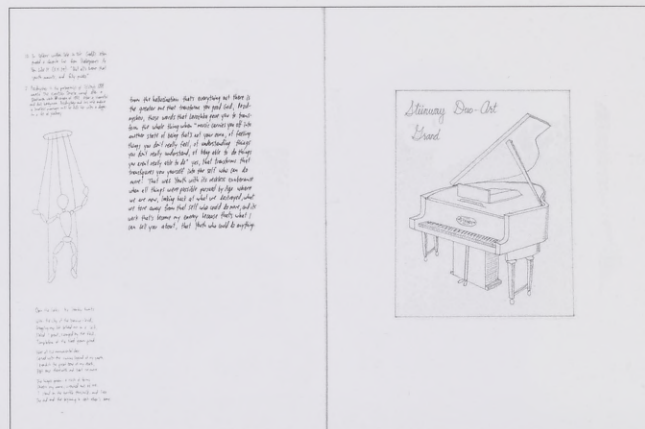
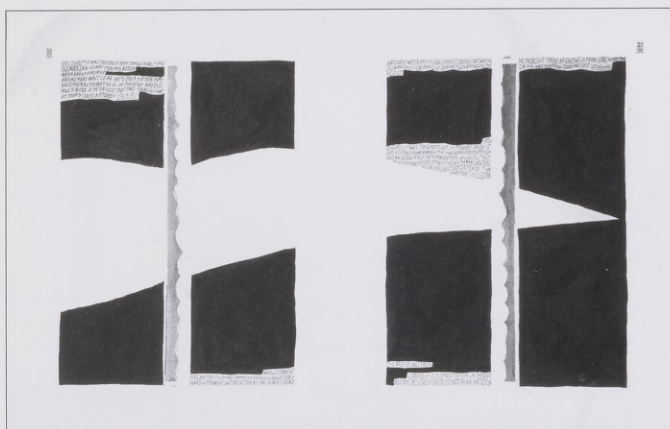
developments are spattered with graffiti, and statues are wrapped in plastic. "The photographs I made while driving around work like pieces of music or film. I use motion and repetition to build up layers of images," Nick explains. "I recently saw ROVA Sax Quartet's electronic performance of John Coltrane's *Ascension*, and there were 12 musicians improvising at once, creating layers and layers of sound. While it might have been a mess of noise, I just closed my eyes and let it all blend together. I think that's a lot like what I expect the viewer to do when looking at my photographs."

The cinematic experience of getting into a car or a train and traveling through the landscape has been a constant throughout Nick's work. "I figured out that the conceptual talk actually comes from the work rather than the work coming from the talk. So my intent is to try and get closer to encapsulating the way people experience the landscape. With most of us, we just drive right through it."

Nick has a new adventure waiting in the wings when he graduates. He will be working as an artist in Latvia on a Fulbright Fellowship. We can hardly wait to see what comes next. —Lucy Martin

Books, Books, Books, and Art

New Faculty Publications and Recent Exhibitions



Acclaimed poet (and SFAI faculty member) **Bill Berkson** has a new book, *Gloria*, accompanied by 25 etchings by Alex Katz, being published by Arion Press this summer. Only two or three limited-edition books are published by Arion Press each year, and each book is conceptually unique, pairing a significant text with the work of a contemporary artist, or providing a purely typographic interpretation of a literary text.

Andrew Hoyem, the press's founder, involved Berkson in a new course for SFAI in the Fall Semester of 2004. Students experienced a combination of lectures and seminars on the history of the printed book from 1500 to the present, observed books in production at Arion, and also produced their own handmade books. They were able to watch the development of Berkson's *Gloria* as it was transformed from typescript to page proofs and as the etchings were incorporated into the book. (Pages from books by SFAI students Lettie Rennekamp and Sam Samuelson are shown above.)

Arion Press and SFAI have maintained a relationship since 1976, when Arion published its first artist book, *A Travel Book*, featuring the work of then SFAI Dean Fred Martin. During the 1980s, Arion Press began to specialize in artist books, which incorporate original prints from the collaboration between Hoyem and prominent artists, including Jim Dine, Jasper Johns, and Robert Motherwell. Hoyem is quick to point out, however, that the Press's books are not necessarily "illustrated" in the traditional sense, but can have components of graphic art which are expressions of the artist that parallel, but do not visually explain, the author's text.

Cultivating artists who are involved with publishing is part of the rich legacies of both SFAI and Arion Press, so it makes sense that these two institutions are planning on working even more closely together in the future. This fall, students will again have the opportunity to participate in a course taught by Andrew Hoyem called *Artists and the Book: The Arion Press Experience*. They will be involved in the creation of an illustrated book produced in a small edition under the direction of Arion Press staff, and will also create a unique book on their own, a free artistic expression responding to an established work of literature.



top left: Lettie Rennekamp, *The Old Man and The Sea*, 2004, artist's book, rapidograph ink and watercolor on paper, 15 x 11 in. (closed)

top right: Sam Samuelson, *Agape*, 2004, artist's book, rapidograph ink on paper, 15 x 11 in. (closed)

above: Alex Katz, *Untitled*, 2004, etching for *Gloria* (text by Bill Berkson), 4 x 4 in. (plate size)

FACULTY EXHIBITIONS

DOMINIC ANGERAME's film *Anaconda Targets DV* was shown recently at the Hong Kong International Film Festival, the Tiburon Film Festival, the Nashville International Film Festival, and Cinematheque at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco.

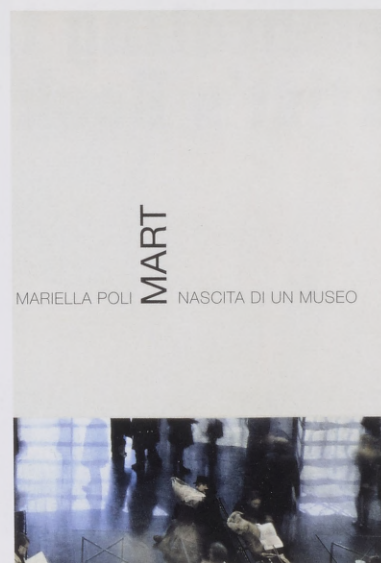
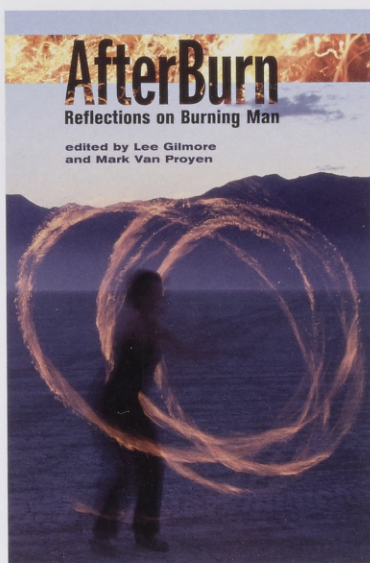
CHARLES BOONE's solo percussion composition, *The Watts Towers*, was performed in Tokyo in December 2004.

ERNIE GEHR's films were included at the reopening of the Museum of Modern Art in New York in November 2004, and the work received an extensive review by J. Hoberman in the February 2005 issue of *ArtForum*.

BRUCE MCGAW's paintings were featured in *A Survey of 50 Years* at the John Natsoulas Gallery in Davis, CA in December 2004.

Other recent museum exhibitions with work by SFAI faculty include the 2004 *California Biennial* (AMY FRANCESCHINI and RIGO 23) at the Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA; and *Neo Mod: Recent Northern California Abstraction* (AMY ELLINGSON and DARREN WATERSTON) at the Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA.

Faculty with recent one-person gallery exhibitions include PEGAN BROOKE (*Fluency*, Friesen Gallery, Seattle); AMY ELLINGSON (*Semper Augustus*, Charles Cowles Gallery, New York); CHRIS FINLEY (*Fluttersuckers*, Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco); CONNIE GOLDMAN (*New Work*, Tangent Contemporary Art, San Francisco); IAN MCDONALD (*Jets warm the come here*, Adobe Books and Backroom Gallery, San Francisco); JILL MILLER (*I Am Making Art Too*, Starkwhite, Auckland, NZ); JEREMY MORGAN (*Geographies*, Baxter Chang Patri Fine Art, San Francisco); J. JOHN PRIOLA (*Farm Sites and Other Works*, Gallery Paule Anglim); BRETT REICHMAN (*Rainbow Play System*, PPOW Gallery, New York); and JOHN ZURIER (*New Paintings*, Larry Becker Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; *New Paintings*, Gallery Paule Anglim, San Francisco).



Burning Man Anthology

University of New Mexico Press will publish the much anticipated *AfterBurn*, edited by Lee Gilmore and SFAI faculty **Mark Van Proyen**, in August 2005. A collection of ten long essays written by a group of academics hailing from disciplines as diverse as anthropology, art history, religious studies, and organizational sociology, *AfterBurn* looks at the notorious Northern California event Burning Man. Considered by Gilmore and Van Proyen as the quintessential post-modern cultural event, Burning Man provides one of the most successful models of interactive cultural praxis on a large scale. Some of the artists whose work is featured in the essays are SFAI alumni David Best MFA'76, **Michael Light** MFA'94, and **Dierdre DeFranceaux** MFA'98. In 2004, nearly 38,000 people from all over the world came to Nevada's Black Rock Desert to participate in the week-long event that has been described as "the best party this side of the apocalypse." Since 1996, Van Proyen has published five articles about Burning Man in several art-related journals, and from 1997 to 2000, he taught an off-site intensive class for the Art Institute that focused on the event.

The Birth of a Museum

The photographs of faculty **Mariella Poli** are the subject of *MART: Nascita di un museo (Birth of a Museum)*, published in December 2004 by Electa. MART stands for the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art of Rovereto and Trento, recently designed by Mario Botta, who is also the architect of San Francisco's Museum of Modern Art. For three years, Poli documented the construction and spatial development of the MART in her home town, Rovereto, Italy. The book functions as a kind of visual diary, in which the viewer can follow the progress of MART—from the first pouring of cement to the installation of the art. The result is not documentary in feel; rather, the photographs and the book as a whole are an exploration of spaces. The project conveys Poli's desire to preserve a memory of the emptiness of the undeveloped site, and of the unfilled and unfinished rooms.

—Compiled by Nina Zurier

Celebrating the Artist's Book



The artist's book, made by hand, has always been treated with kid gloves. It's a form that has gained in popularity in recent years.

The recently established Center for Word, Text, and Image at SFAI is one of the conduits by which the Art Institute reaches out to other organizations and cultural institutions. Among its first and most fruitful relationships is that with another "center"—the San Francisco Center for the Book.

The Center for the Book (SFCB) is devoted to teaching the many arts and crafts that go into making books by hand. Its focus is the artist's book, and since 1996 it has offered an array of workshops, classes, lectures, exhibitions, and hands-on facilities for anyone interested in the book arts.

Collaborations between the Art Institute and the Center for the Book go back to *Art Making Book Making Art*, a symposium/exhibition organized in 1998 by Chuck Hobson, who has been teaching classes in artists' books at SFAI for 16 years. That highly successful event, with a symposium held at the Art Institute and an exhibition put on at the Center for the Book, led to further collaborations. These have included ongoing activities, such as Les Ferriss's letterpress class for SFAI students, which was hosted by SFCB until the Art Institute acquired its own Vandercook Press; and a presentation/discussion at SFAI of the work of eight book artists who had worked at Xerox PARC in an experimental digital studio for book arts, which SFCB had been closely involved in.

"More recently," says Steve Woodall, SFCB's artistic director, "the Center for the Book agreed to be a constituent of the new Center for Word, Text, and Image at SFAI, along with Arion Press. We have begun an annual visiting artist program, with an out-of-town artist delivering a lecture at SFAI and conducting a workshop at the Center. The first of these programs took place last December, with Harry Reese and Sandra Liddell Reese of Santa Barbara's Turkey Press. It was a success, with a very well-attended program at SFAI and a very solid workshop at the Center. The next program, with an artist yet to be decided, will take place in spring 2006."

The establishment of the Center for Word, Text, and Image at SFAI has formalized and expanded the connections between the two organizations. SFCB (along with Arion Press) was "one of the Center's first fundamental outside

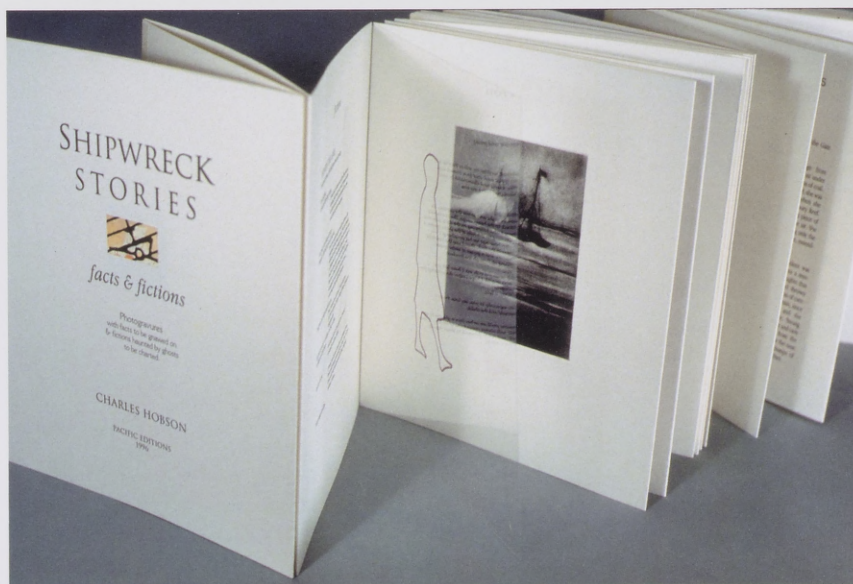


top: San Francisco typographer Jack Stauffacher (left) and legendary German type designer Hermann Zapf pull a print on the Center's Vandercook 219. Stauffacher taught at SFAI in the 1950s and '60s.

above center: A class in session in the Center's print studio/gallery space.

above: Pulling an oversize print with a steamroller at Roadworks, the Center's annual printmaking event. This year's Roadworks is scheduled for September 24.

Charles Hobson, *Shipwreck Stories*, 1996, Accordion book with photogravures, handcolored charts and drawings on mylar, 10.5 x 8.75 x 1 in., edition of 28



On View

Chuck Hobson's *Shipwreck Stories* is one of four of his books in a solo exhibition, *Starlings, Stars, Shipwrecks & Degas*, at Patricia Sweetow Gallery, San Francisco (April 20–May 28, 2005). *Shipwreck Stories* is constructed around the idea of a reader assembling a collage in the mind, creating a kind of collaboration between the artist and the reader. For each of six shipwrecks the reader is given a historical chart, a factual summary, a piece of fictional writing, a drawing (reproduced as a photogravure), and a traced outline on transparent film of a figure from a 19th century photograph of shipwreck bystanders. The viewer assembles these pieces of evidence in his or her mind, collecting and sorting fact and fiction as he or she considers appropriate.

John D. Berry is a graphic designer, creative director, and book editor who lives in Seattle.

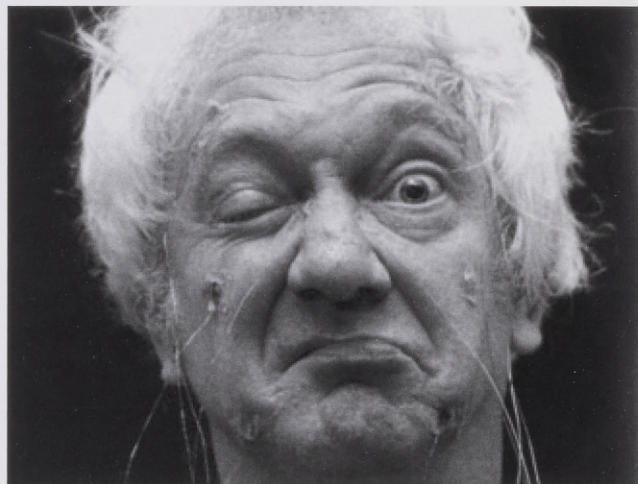
relationships," according to Robin Gianattassio-Malle, the current head of the Center for Word, Text, and Image. Gianattassio-Malle says that this kind of partnership gives students a way to "take their work outside the confines of the Institute" and investigate the intersections of art and context, of rhythm and language, of the internal and the external world.

In May, the two centers, along with the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, are organizing a month-long festival of the artist's book. In addition to exhibits involving several Bay Area galleries, this celebration features a panel discussion with Manuel Neri at the Legion of Honor, on May 20, and a seminar at the Center for the Book called "Turn this into a book: how artists' books get made," on May 21. The seminar is aimed at curators, dealers, artists, collectors, and librarians; its topics include: "where the rubber meets the road; how concepts change to meet real-world constraints," and "a primer for dealers and collectors; where to look for value, how to judge condition, criteria for selling and buying an artist's book." Clearly, the focus is not only on how artists' books get conceived and made, but on how this artform fits into the art world.

Besides special events, there's a constant exchange between the Center for the Book and the Art Institute. "On an ongoing basis," says the SFCB's Woodall, "John DeMerritt and Michael Creeden bring their photo/artist book classes in for one or two studio visits per semester, where they take advantage of our bindery facility. Chuck also brings his artist's book class in for a field trip each semester, which usually features a docent tour of the current exhibition by me, as well as a talk on the Bay Area artist's book community. Overall, I think you can say that the Center affords SFAI students access to the mainstream of the community of practicing artists in this interesting but (so far) spectacularly unremunerative field." —**John D. Berry**

'Leonardo' Comes to Campus

The renowned journal, published by MIT Press, will relocate its editorial offices to SFAI in July.



Our lives are changed daily by the collaborative projects of artists, scientists, and technologists. Just ask Pamela Grant-Ryan, Managing Editor of *Leonardo*, the journal of the International Society for the Arts, Sciences, and Technology that is moving its editorial offices onto SFAI's campus this summer.

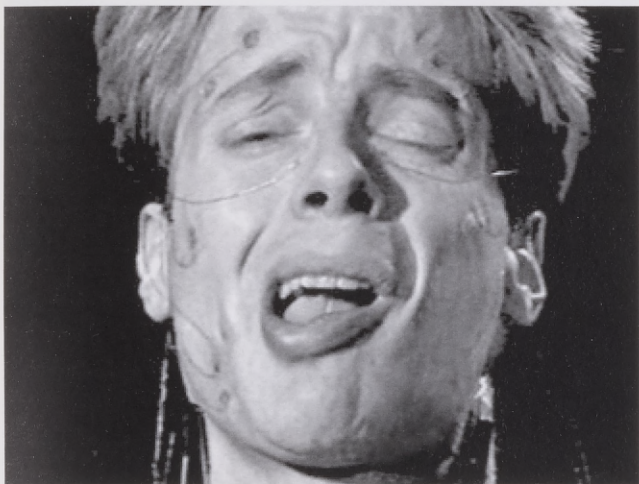
"We are realizing that artists have a different way of looking at things. And collaborative teams are being formed so that they can use artists to develop new ways of approaching problems," says Grant-Ryan. "Information is becoming a mess because there is so much of it, and scientists are finding that artists are the people who can help us make sense of it. For example, scientists and artists have been finding ways that sound can help anesthesiologists decipher data, rather than just reading it from a screen."

The relocation of the editorial headquarters for *Leonardo* and the *Leonardo Music Journal* to the Art Institute will further cultivate a scholarly level of interaction between art and science here at SFAI. "As *Leonardo* grows," explains Roger Malina, Chair of the *Leonardo* Board, "one of our primary goals is to reach out to the new generation of artists who are developing—in so many different ways—the interdisciplinary forms envisioned by *Leonardo*'s founders, and also to promote scholarship by historians and theoreticians of this growing area of practice. This partnership will allow us to continue working with all of our university partners while giving us direct access to a young and vibrant artistic community."

Leonardo was established by Roger Malina's father, Frank Malina, a WWII rocket scientist who began making electronic kinetic art after the war. Frank Malina's deep interest in kinetic art led him to the library, where he searched for information on kinetic artists and artists working with kinetics. "He was shocked when he found that artists basically weren't writing," explains Grant-Ryan. "Frank felt deeply that artists needed to talk to each other in order to progress." So Frank took it upon himself to establish a journal that would publish the writing of artists through the peer-reviewed model of scientific journals. The first issue of *Leonardo* was printed in 1968.

Now *Leonardo* is on volume 38 and will celebrate its 40th anniversary at SFAI. It is known world-wide as a professional journal that promotes scholarship and

On April 1, Dutch artists Arthur Elsenaar and Remko Scha presented (at SFAI) an automatic performance/ video installation that involved computer-controlled facial expression, algorithmic music, and synthetic speech. This was the first lecture co-sponsored by *Leonardo* and SFAI, and there are plans to involve more *Leonardo* authors and prize winners in SFAI public programs. Arthur Elsenaar is an artist and electrical engineer who ran his own pirate radio station and built the transmitters for many illegal radio and television stations throughout the Netherlands. Elsenaar's recent work employs the human face as a computer-controlled display



device. Remko Scha is an artist, DJ, and computational linguist. He has built an automatic electric guitar band ("The Machines"), designed an image-generation algorithm ("Artificial"), and developed a theory about language-processing ("Data-Oriented Parsing"). The works by these artists have been presented at scientific conferences, theater festivals, and art exhibitions throughout Europe and the United States. Elsenaar and Scha also explore the use of automatic radio stations as a medium for computer art. Their *Leonardo* paper may be found online at <http://mitpress2.mit.edu/e-journals/Leonardo/isast/awardwinners.html/>.

documentation on the work of artists involved with the sciences and new technologies and stimulates collaboration among artists, scientists, and engineers.

Several exciting projects have already developed between the Art Institute community and *Leonardo*. The first of a series of joint lectures featuring *Leonardo* authors and prize winners took place in April, when the artists Arthur Elsenaar and Remko Scha presented their joint work on computer-controlled facial expression and a survey of the historical antecedents to this work. Elsenaar and Scha received a *Leonardo* Award for Excellence in 2003 for their essay "Electric Body Manipulation as Performance Art: A Historical Perspective."

An internship program between *Leonardo* and SFAI is also under development through the Center for Art+Science at SFAI. Interns will be invited to assist international editors with event planning and coordination, and gain experience behind the scenes in planning international art/science/technology events. "The presence of *Leonardo* on campus will expand opportunities for SFAI students to further explore the intersections of new media, art, science, criticism, and publishing," says Chris Bratton, President of the Art Institute.

Many other exciting projects are anticipated in the upcoming months for *Leonardo*. "The highest priority right now is a special issue of the journal to be published with a DVD to coincide with the International Symposium of Electronic Art (ISEA) in San Jose in 2006. Art Institute faculty and coordinator of the Center for Media Culture Paul Klein is involved with this, and there is talk of students being involved with the DVD package for this special issue. *Leonardo* will also be hosting a pre-symposium program at ISEA 2006 called "The Pacific Rim New Media Summit," which is "a gathering of organizations and representatives from the Pacific Rim and Asia to focus on the development of partnerships among institutions, with the objective of addressing the challenges of how information technology and creativity are shaping new directions in art, science, architecture, design, literature, theatre, music, academic research, and information technology-based industry," according to Grant-Ryan.

"*Leonardo* and SFAI are both small and focused organizations," she says, "yet we both continue to make a large impact on our fields." —Lucy Martin

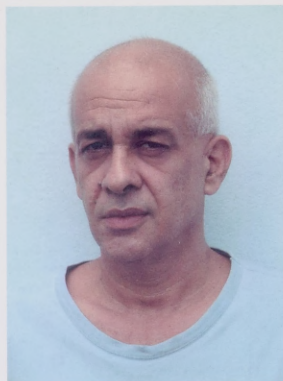


Marion E. Greene

2005 Commencement Honorees

The SFAI Douglas G. MacAgy Distinguished Achievement Award for 2005 has been awarded to activist and philanthropist **Marion E. Greene**. The award is named after former SFAI president Douglas MacAgy, who started his career as a curator at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. During his time as president at SFAI (1945–1950), MacAgy encouraged Abstract Expressionism and helped to establish the work of Clyfford Still, Mark Rothko, and others. The MacAgy Distinguished Achievement Award recognizes exceptional achievement in art education by an individual or organization.

This year's recipient, Marion E. Greene, was born in St. Louis, Missouri and moved at an early age to Cleveland, where she attended public schools and eventually Ohio State University. After college, Greene spent several years working with underserved children, teaching theater, and staging productions in Cleveland's bath houses. In the early '60s she moved with her four children to Boca Raton, Florida and helped found a Unitarian Universalist Fellowship. Through her work with the Fellowship, she became involved in



Cildo Meireles, portrait by Wilton Montenegro.
right: Cildo Meireles
Volátil (installation view), 1980/94
wood, ash, candle, essence,
dimensions variable. Courtesy of
Galerie Lelong, New York, 1995.



the Civil Rights movement in Florida, where she participated in sit-ins at lunch counters and worked to integrate Boca Raton's institutions. When her children were grown, Greene moved to Mexico and spent many years developing jobs and working on health and education issues in an unincorporated slum on the outskirts of Cuernavaca. After returning to the US, Greene founded the LEF Foundation with her children in 1985. The LEF Foundation supports the creation and presentation of contemporary work in the arts by awarding grants in visual, literary, media, and performing arts; cultural preservation; and support for the improvement of the urban communities and the natural environment. In the 20 years that LEF has been active, the Foundation has reflected Marion's belief that art can be transformative and that social justice is the basis for everything. Aside from her full involvement with LEF, Marion has worked on the boards of numerous Bay Area cultural institutions, including San Francisco Art Institute and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

Brazilian sculptor **Cildo Meireles** is the 2005 recipient of an Honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts from SFAI. From his first museum show in 1967,

Meireles has been known for creating participatory work—now considered “relational”—that involves conceptual responses to cultural conditions. In his 1970 work *Insertions into Ideological Circuits*, Meireles clandestinely printed subversive political messages on local currency and bottles of Coca-Cola. His interest lay in the possibilities for propagandistic engagement with objects. In *Volatile*, a work from 1980–1994, he filled a room to mid-calf with several tons of light gray powdered ash. Barefoot viewers encountered the smell of gas, a hissing sound, and a single candle: a combination that provoked a simultaneous sense of tranquility and deep anxiety. His work at *Documenta 11* (for which SFAI's new dean, Okwui Enwezor, served as artistic director) involved the sale of frozen water popsicles for 1 Euro each. This project alluded to, among other things, the ongoing pollution of water resources and global warming, as well as issues of relative value and exchange.

Meireles was born in Rio de Janeiro in 1948. A retrospective of his work, organized by Dan Cameron and Gerardo Mosquera, was presented at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York in 1999, and then traveled to the Museu de Arte Moderna in Rio de Janeiro and the Museu de Arte Moderna



Clive McCarthy

in Sao Paulo. His work has been seen recently in the exhibitions: *Beyond Geometry: Experiments in Forms 1940s–70s*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2004); *Descala and Strictu*, Galerie Lelong, New York (2004); *Liverpool Biennial*, Liverpool (2004); *Uneasy Space*, Site Santa Fe, Santa Fe, New Mexico (2003); and *Poetic Justice: 8th Istanbul Biennial* (2003).

New Trustee

Alumnus **Clive McCarthy** (MFA 2004) joined the SFAI Board of Trustees in November 2004.

Clive McCarthy was born in Upton Park, London in 1946. He gained a BSc (1st class Honours) in Electronics from the University of Salford in 1969, and has lived in Northern California since 1979.

Following his graduation from Salford, McCarthy went to work in the semiconductor industry, alternating between engineering and marketing jobs. His engineering work included stints ranging from working in a wafer fab clean room (wearing a 'bunny' suit every day) to managing a small group of software engineers and presenting new product introductions to large technical audiences around the world. By 1997, McCarthy headed a chip and software

development organization with 200 employees and an annual budget of \$25 million. This was the conclusion of his career in the semiconductor industry.

In the years that followed, McCarthy says he sat and waited for something to happen.

In early 2000, he began printing digital images and found a medium that excited him, so he decided to attend art school. He found inspiration in a quotation of David Hockney's from a January 2000 *New Yorker* article:

From this day forward, one might want to say, paraphrasing Delaroche, chemical photography is over! The monocular claim to univalent objective reality is falling away once and for all, and we are being thrust back on ourselves, forced to take responsibility for the way we make and shape our realities, with eye and hand and heart. Who knows where it all will lead? But it's a very exciting time.

Clive McCarthy completed his MFA at the San Francisco Art Institute in 2004. His work invariably uses computers, with images presented in a variety of media.



Lisa James

New Vice President of Advancement

Lisa James joined SFAI on April 18, bringing with her over 22 years' experience in development and fundraising for wide-ranging nonprofits in the academic and arts communities in the Bay Area and nationally. Most recently (2003–2005), she served as Vice President of Development for Earthjustice, an Oakland-based nonprofit offering pro bono legal services for environmental causes nationally and internationally. Previous to this position, James led development efforts at the San Francisco Opera from 1998 to 2003, serving successively as Director of Institutional Gifts and Corporate and Foundation Relations, as Associate Director, and then as Director of Development. James holds an MA in Business from the University of Wisconsin in Madison, and a BA in Political Science, Phi Beta Kappa, from the University of Denver.

—Compiled by Nina Zurier

The Power of Place

What is it that makes one place riveting and compelling and another illegible or inert, regardless of age or adornment? I think it is the cumulative presence of those who have inhabited it. Let me explain by offering a couple of examples, one drawn from nature and the other from my own artmaking.

One might look at a Bonsai tree as a bit of nature that has been redirected by its circumstance. The art form of Bonsai as it is appreciated in different parts of the world is based on the expression of an ordinary tree growing in extraordinary circumstances. A natural Bonsai, which is the inspiration for the formal Art of Bonsai, may grow in a niche high up on a cliff, perhaps at a place where airborne dust and moisture have had the opportunity to collect. A seed that ends up there via the wind or a bird will sprout and grow to reflect its improbable surrounding from the instant of its germination. Its trunk will diagram the cell-by-cell compromise between gravity and nourishment as it arches toward optimal light.

A few years ago, I was asked by some French art students to discuss an installation I had done in their neighborhood. It consisted of a mechanically animated, translucent, plastic marionette and a high-wattage theater light that cast the shadow of the puppet's motion on the wall of their local, 800-year-old chateau. As I explained to them, what I thought I was doing in that installation was joining, self-consciously, the nearly continuous parade of occupants whose shadows and their trceries had made the old chateau the "place" that it is today. By that, I meant that in the same way that light bleaches colors, burns images on a video monitor, and determines the growth of a natural Bonsai, the cumulative shadows of the lives in the chateau, via torchlight, candlelight, gaslight, daylight, and electric light, had left their trceries on the walls, creating a diffuse but indelible presence, at once intimate and immense in that enduring place—the presence of the lives that had passed through there since 1320.

I would add to these examples of compelling singularities—the Bonsai tree and the 14th century chateau—this paraphrase of one thesis presented in Gaston Bachelard's *Poetics of Space*, which states that the shelter and sustenance provided by the "home" allow someone a safe place to daydream. He was not referring to "home" as a mere refuge from the elements any more than he was referring to "daydreaming" as idle wool gathering; he meant reverie, or the elusive "homeness" of a place which allows and sustains daydreaming, that vital and necessary psychic refuge we instinctively seek, where the inexorability of things can momentarily loosen their grip on our dreams. The chateau was a place of physical refuge, a place where people gathered under siege, where there were parties, intrigue, murders, brutality, and banality, but above all, the refuge where one could daydream, a place of reverie.

After 34 years of employment at the San Francisco Art Institute, I can say that this place reflects the culture of the Chateau, and the nature of the Bonsai. This place has a natural singularity that has catalyzed the poetic imagination. People are drawn to this place because of what is simultaneously indelible and diffuse about its being. —Richard Berger



Artist at Work (installation), 1998, marionette, motors, lights, plexiglas, dimensions variable, Chateau Copiac, Copiac, France

Richard Berger is resident faculty and former chair of the Sculpture Department. He is an artist who has taught at SFAI since 1970. His work is featured in the permanent collections of the Oakland Museum of California, the Contemporary Museum in Honolulu, and the Monterey Peninsula Museum. Berger has received a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship and was the 45th recipient of the SFAI Adaline Kent Award, which included an exhibition, *The Third Time I Saw Phyllis She Exploded*, at SFAI's Walter Galleries in 2004.

Adaline Kent and Tournesol Award Exhibitions

Two exhibitions honoring the 2005 awardees Scott Williams (Adaline Kent) and Chris Ballantyne (Tournesol) will be on view in SFAI's Walter Gallery and McBean Project Space, June 18 – July 30, 2005. An opening reception will be held Friday, June 17, from 5:30 to 8:30.

Scott Williams, a San Franciscan known for his innovative use of stencils in graffiti and graphic art forms such as 'zines, artists' books, and graphic novels, has been chosen as the 2005 Adaline Kent Award artist by the SFAI Artists Committee. The award is named for SFAI alumna Adaline Kent and has been given annually to a California artist since 1959. Williams's work involves complex layering and repetition of imagery appropriated from popular West Coast culture, such as Hollywood, pulp fiction, and marine life.

Alumnus **Chris Ballantyne** MFA'02 has been announced as the recipient of the second Tournesol Award by the Headlands Center for the Arts. This award is given annually to an emerging painter to assist her or him in establishing a practice in the Bay Area. In drawings and paintings Ballantyne comments on what he perceives as an American obsession with ownership and domination of the landscape. Empty pools, fences, tract homes, and highway overpasses are just some of the elements he uses to convey the complex relationship between people and their environments.



Left & below:
SCOTT WILLIAMS
Gemstone Fever, 2003
artist's book; text and
binding by Fred Rinne,
12.5 x 9.5 inches (closed)

Bottom:
CHRIS BALLANTYNE
Untitled (split), 2005; acrylic
on paper, 12 x 16 inches
Courtesy Peres Projects,
Los Angeles and Berlin





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LARRY THOMAS

Wild Cherry Stump, 1991
graphite on gesso panel
23.75 x 12.5 inches

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